

August 20, 2019

**Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste  
Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)**

**Mercer-Fraser Company - Essex Gravel Extraction Operation, Mad River  
40.9054° N, 124.045° W  
WDID 1B02101WNHU, CW-240379**

**Humboldt County**

On August 7, 2019, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received a letter from Mercer-Fraser (applicant), requesting reissuance of federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification (certification) for activities associated with annual gravel (river-run aggregate) extraction operations at the Essex Gravel Bar (project) on the lower Mad River. A previous certification was issued for the project on September 13, 2012. No modifications to the project are proposed. The project is located near river miles 8.4 - 8.8 and covers approximately eight acres along the south side of Highway 299 near the Glendale Drive off ramp, east of Arcata, California.

**Project Description**

The purpose of this project is to continue ongoing annual extraction and stockpiling of river run material from the 3.5-acre Essex gravel bar within the channel of the Mad River. Extraction operations may include bar skimming, trenching, alcoves, and/or other extraction techniques. Processing and stockpiling of aggregate would occur at an existing upland yard area located adjacent to the extraction site. Annual extraction from the Essex Bar typically does not exceed 5,000 cubic yards, however, the actual volume removed, and the specific area of extraction varies from year-to-year.

Annual extraction planning is subject to review and approvals by Humboldt County, National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Regional Water Board.

**Project Timeline**

Annual operations would occur between June 1 and October 15, annually. Extensions of the extraction season to October 31 are possible with agency approval.

**Receiving Waters**

The project would cause disturbances to waters of the U.S. and the state associated with the Mad River, within the Mad River Hydrologic Unit No. 109.10.

**Impacts**

The proposed project would result in temporary impacts to approximately three and a half acres of streambed within the Mad River.

**Mitigation**

The impacts associated with the project are considered temporary and self-mitigating. Therefore, no additional mitigation would be required.

**Other Agency Permits and Actions**

Aggregate extraction operations at the site have been regulated under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Letter of Permission (LOP) procedure for gravel extraction in Humboldt County pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. A Letter of Permission authorizing aggregate extraction operations at these gravel bars under LOP 2015-1 was issued by USACE in 2015. The USACE may regulate the applicant's aggregate extraction activities under LOP 2015-1, a new LOP procedure, an individual section 404 permit, or by Letter of Modification. Additionally, the applicant will obtain a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**CEQA**

In October 2015, Humboldt County Planning and Building Department, as lead agency for CEQA, completed a Final Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for Gravel Extraction on the Lower Mad River and filed a Notice of Completion with the State Clearinghouse (SCH# 1992083049).

**Public Comments**

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all phone calls and comments submitted in writing and received within a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this notice and ends at 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. Please contact Jake Shannon at [Jacob.shannon@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Jacob.shannon@waterboards.ca.gov) or (707) 576-2673 within 21 days of the posting of this notice if you have any questions or comments.

The information contained in this public notice is only a summary of the applicant's proposed activities. The Regional Water Board's project file includes the application for certification and additional details of the proposed project, including maps and design drawings. Project documents and any comments received are on file and may be reviewed or copied at the Regional Water Board office, 5550 Skylane Boulevard, Suite A, Santa Rosa, California. Appointments are recommended for document review. Appointments can be made by calling (707) 576-2220.

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